

Quiet March in Memphis Salutes Dreams of Martin Luther King

Part 4/5/78

From News Dispatches

MEMPHIS—The dreams of Martin Luther King Jr. were relived yesterday by 1,700 friends and followers who took to the streets for a peaceful march in the city where the civil rights leader was slain 10 years ago.

But many of the thousands who once lined Beale Street where King led his last march on behalf of the city's striking sanitation workers in 1968 stayed home.

Those who did march did so quietly, carrying only memories and posters with the plea "Keep the Dream Alive."

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which King founded, led a similarly peaceful march in Gadsden, Ala., to protest the recent shooting death by police of a young black man. There were scattered observance elsewhere in the country, including Atlanta.

King's widow, Coretta Scott King, placed a wreath at the King tomb next to Ebenezer Baptist Church where her husband once served as pastor.

The Memphis march, sponsored by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, which represented the striking sanitation workers in 1968, began silently for the three-block walk to the Lorraine Motel.

King was shot while standing on a balcony of the Lorraine on April 4, 1968.

As the solemn march began, there were no chants for equality or strains of "we shall overcome"—only the friendly chattering of longtime friends swapping memories.

As the crowd neared the now run-down motel at the south end of the downtown district, the marchers began to claphands in unison and broke into song, singing "When the Saints Go Marching In."

The singing ended quietly at the motel, where the

marchers bowed their heads while the Rev. Fred C. Lotton, pastor of the Metropolitan Baptist Church in Memphis, offered a brief prayer.

"A gentle warrior has fallen and we who are yet alive must keep his dream alive," Lotton said. "Martin is not dead for his dream keeps marching along."

While marchers commemorated the 10th anniversary of the slaying, King's convicted assassin spent the day behind bars in a Tennessee prison. James Earl Ray is at Brushy Mountain State Prison in Petros, where he is serving a 99-year-sentence.

In Gadsden, Ala., about 1,000 people marched in observance of the assassination anniversary and in protest over the recent police shooting of a black. Joseph Lowery, president of the SCLC, was among those taking part in the march to the county courthouse.

The Alabama marchers were calling for the suspension of six police officers involved in the Jan. 20 shooting of 27-year-old Collis Madden.

In Atlanta, King's widow told about 75 onlookers "we still have much, much yet to do to fully achieve Martin's dream. About half of those present were photographers and reporters. "We have made considerable progress in many areas during the last 10 years, but our society today still tolerates human suffering," she said.

Among other observances, the African-American Student Association gathered at Boston University to lay a wreath at a statue of King in front of Marsh Chapel and a candlelight ceremony was scheduled for last night at the university's law school. King took his doctorate in theology at Boston University in 1955 and met his future wife there.

Bishop John H. Burt of the Episcopal Diocese of Cleveland led an ecumenical memorial service in honor of King in that city.



United Press International

Mourners assemble below motel balcony in Memphis where Martin Luther King Jr. was shot 10 years ago.